

# **Project Profiles in Regional Housing Mobility Chicago and Rockford**

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Office of Public and Indian Housing  
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## Preface

In November 2015, Econometrica, Inc., and BRick Partners, LLC, were tasked by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with developing two profiles of project-based regional housing mobility programs. HUD requested that at least one such profile feature a community in which a mobility program was initiated voluntarily (i.e., not as a result of litigation). The goal was to provide these project profiles to attendees of the *Regional Housing Mobility Programs: Practitioner Convening* scheduled for January 21–22, 2016. Like the convening itself, this paper is meant to be a peer-to-peer learning tool.

The two programs profiled here (based in Chicago and Rockford, Illinois) were chosen for two reasons. First, BRick had extensive experience with the Chicago-area effort and could provide working knowledge of its history and outcomes within the short turnaround time of the assignment. Second, the challenges and aspirations in the Rockford area are similar to those in Chicago, but the region is sufficiently different—in terms of size, capacity, organization, and history—to serve as a useful comparison for meeting attendees.

Econometrica and BRick conducted extensive fact-checking of the information presented in each profile. It is important to note, however, that much of the material contained in the profiles was provided firsthand by program participants and is not therefore suited for fact-checking.

## **Acknowledgments**

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**Chicago area:** RAND Corporation; Metropolitan Planning Council; Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; McHenry County Housing Authority

**Rockford area:** Alan Zais, Executive Director, Winnebago County Housing Authority; Ron Clewer, Executive Director, Rockford Housing Authority; Larry Williams, Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Freeport

## **Regional Housing Mobility: Chicago Area**

To increase the quality housing options available to households on their Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) waiting lists, 10 public housing agencies (PHAs) in metropolitan Chicago work together and with other partners to operate a regional project-based voucher (PBV) program known as the Regional Housing Initiative (RHI). Before RHI, the two larger PHAs—the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Housing Authority of Cook County—had tenant-based voucher programs already helping families make mobility moves, but the rental housing supply was limited, and many property owners were reluctant to rent to voucher holders, especially in opportunity areas.<sup>1</sup> CHA was the only PHA that had done any project-basing at that time, and only in a few supportive housing sites. Other PHAs, many in the opportunity-rich areas of the region, had significantly smaller voucher allocations and no experience supporting private-sector development.

This profile provides background on the initiative and describes the structure of RHI, the roles of the various partners, how RHI operates, and how it has been funded.

### ***Background***

In the late 1990s, the tight rental market in metropolitan Chicago was in tremendous flux, with pressing questions surfacing about the future of public and workforce housing options. More than 40 percent of the CHA's public housing stock—18,000 units<sup>2</sup>—was at risk of demolition, having failed a quality assessment mandated by Congress.<sup>3</sup> Displaced families were to receive an HCV, a subsidy to offset the price of private-market rental housing, on either a temporary or permanent basis. Concurrent with the upheaval in the CHA's housing stock, business leaders and other stakeholders observed a growth in

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<sup>1</sup> Chiem, Phat X. "Section 8 Renters Find Closed Doors in Northwest Suburbs." *Chicago Tribune*, 1 Feb. 1998.

<sup>2</sup> McRoberts, Flynn. "CHA May Be Forced to Raze 18,000 Units." *Chicago Tribune*, 24 July 1997. Web. [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-07-24/news/9707240234\\_1\\_cha-chicago-housing-authority-public-housing](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-07-24/news/9707240234_1_cha-chicago-housing-authority-public-housing)

<sup>3</sup> *Chicago Housing Authority: Plan for Transformation – Improving Public Housing in Chicago and the Quality of Life*. Chicago Housing Authority, 6 Jan. 2000. Web. <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=chaFY2000-Annual-Plan.pdf>

population and job opportunities in the suburbs that strained the region's housing and transportation capacity.<sup>4</sup> New data and solutions were needed to understand and address these growth trends.<sup>5</sup>

To assess the potential impact of this influx of public housing families into the private rental market, as well as how much public housing to redevelop and how much additional housing was needed for the growing workforce, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), CHA, and other public-sector entities and private foundations jointly funded a regional market study to determine the ability of the private market to meet the increased housing need.<sup>6</sup>

The study found that the region lost 52,000 rental units during the 1990s, when population and job growth were both in the double digits, exacerbating the lack of rental housing in the Chicago metropolitan region—particularly for very-low income households in areas close to job growth.<sup>7</sup> Highlighting the negative perceptions of affordable housing and the challenges of forging leadership to address the growing jobs-housing mismatch, the market study suggested the need for further cooperation among housing authorities, governmental bodies, and community-based organizations.<sup>8</sup>

This profile looks at one small but potentially scalable example of such cooperation.

### ***Structure of the Regional PBV Program***

RHI is characterized by two features: the pooling of vouchers contributed by participating PHAs and the use of those vouchers to develop project-based housing that meets agreed-

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<sup>4</sup> Mieszkowski, Peter, and Edwin S. Mills. "The Causes of Metropolitan Suburbanization." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 7.3 (1993): 135–147.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Elmer W. *Chicago Metropolis 2020: Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21st Century*. The Commercial Club of Chicago in association with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Jan. 1999.

<sup>6</sup> *For Rent: Housing Options in the Chicago Region – Regional Rental Market Analysis Summary Report*, November 1999, p. 7. Metropolitan Planning Council, Nov. 1999. Web. <http://www.metroplanning.org/uploads/cms/documents/RRMA.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

upon priorities, including locational criteria. The table below shows vouchers committed by participating PHAs from 2002 through 2015.

**Vouchers committed to RHI by participating PHAs (2002–2015)**

<b>PHA</b>	<b>Vouchers</b>
Chicago Housing Authority	350 <sup>9</sup>
DuPage Housing Authority	32
Housing Authority of Cook County	290
Housing Authority of Joliet	8
Housing Authority of Park Forest	2
McHenry Housing Authority	14
Lake County Housing Authority	59
North Chicago Housing Authority	2
Oak Park Housing Authority	10
Waukegan Housing Authority	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>771</b>

RHI is formalized by means of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that specifies that participating PHAs contribute 10 percent of their turnover HCVs to the regional pool upon entering into the IGA, with the option of adjusting annually. Over the years, as RHI has grown to include more PHAs, each of the newly added PHAs has adopted the IGA. While Illinois state law allows PHAs to operate and manage vouchers in each other's jurisdictions (a law in existence prior to RHI), RHI has created Operating and Management Agreements (OMAs) to facilitate that process in a consistent and efficient manner, while also allowing individual PHAs to work out roles and responsibilities differently.

Participating PHAs also adopted an addendum to their Administrative Plan. The addendum is intended to ensure coordination among the participating PHAs. It specifies such items as

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<sup>9</sup> Subject to final board approval, in January 2016 CHA increased its commitment from 219 to 350.

the selection factors for PBV proposals and how the centralized waiting list will operate (described more fully in the section titled “How RHI Operates”).

The IGA, the OMAs, and the addendum all specify roles and responsibilities of the PHAs and their partners, who are also signatories to the IGA.

### ***RHI Partners and Their Roles***

RHI comprises not only PHAs, but other partners as well. The PHAs involved in RHI have enjoyed a degree of leverage, community acceptance, and political support that they would have been challenged to achieve without the participation of these partners and other stakeholders.<sup>10</sup> These non-PHA partners have provided numerous resources, capacity, and technical assistance to RHI, assisting in the creation of RHI and continuing to support many important aspects of the initiative.

At the inception of RHI, IHDA and the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) were signatories to the IGA and therefore formal RHI partners. Recently, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) agreed to assume the role held by MPC.

### **Illinois Housing Development Authority**

IHDA is the state’s housing finance agency. It allocates Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), the primary financing mechanism to support the development of affordable rental housing. IHDA has worked with RHI to create a unified application process for developers seeking both LIHTCs and PBVs from the regional pool. IHDA’s Qualified Allocation Plan provides extra points for developments that include RHI subsidies, providing an important incentive to encourage developers to reserve units for families on PHA waiting lists. IHDA participates in RHI’s development selection review as an advisor.

### **Metropolitan Planning Council**

An independent, not-for-profit, nonpartisan policy and advocacy organization, MPC has been involved in efforts to address Chicago’s “jobs–housing mismatch” since before the

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<sup>10</sup> “Aligning Efforts to Support Equitable Development.” *PD&R Edge: An Online Magazine*, Mar. 2014. Web. 4 Jan. 2016. [http://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr\\_edge\\_featd\\_article\\_032414.html](http://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_featd_article_032414.html)



inception of RHI. Initially, MPC managed all aspects of the operation of RHI. For example, MPC worked with the participating PHAs to develop agreed-upon selection criteria for PBV proposals and facilitated the competition through which regional PBVs are awarded, ensuring that the process complied with PBV program requirements for the selection of PBV proposals. MPC also staffed the review process and the selection committee. As an advocate, MPC leveraged its work with suburban leaders, employer-assisted housing providers, and state-level policymakers to support RHI goals.

### **Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning**

CMA is the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization. It was created by the Regional Planning Act of 2005, a result of advocacy at the state level on behalf of a range of stakeholders, including housing advocates. The organization was formed through a merger of two agencies that had addressed population growth, sprawl, and transportation funding issues.<sup>11</sup> A HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative grant recipient, CMA addresses housing goals to advance livable communities in its GO TO 2040 regional plan<sup>12</sup> and its Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA).<sup>13</sup> As of 2015, CMA has assumed leadership of RHI, taking responsibility for the tasks formerly performed by MPC and aligning the selection process more directly with the FHEA.

CMA also maintains an advisory relationship with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), a membership organization founded in 1997 and composed of mayors from the Chicago region's approximately 280 cities, towns, and villages. The MMC Housing and Development Committee focuses on addressing local housing challenges. This committee, which was launched in response to the same 1999 market study that led to the

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<sup>11</sup> Wronski, Richard. "7-County Planning Board Launches." *Chicago Tribune*, 21 Oct. 2005. Web. [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2005-10-21/news/0510210017\\_1\\_planning-official-regional-planning-board-kendall](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2005-10-21/news/0510210017_1_planning-official-regional-planning-board-kendall)

<sup>12</sup> *GO TO 2040*. Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014. Web. <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/about/2040>

<sup>13</sup> *Fair Housing and Equity Assessment: Metropolitan Chicago*. Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Nov. 2013. Web. <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/198094/Chicago%20Region%20FHEA%20November%202013%20HUD%20Submission.pdf/b0c6946e-4425-49fe-8d0a-f336903bc464>

establishment of RHI, seeks through its “Housing Endorsement Criteria” to guide the development of high-quality, well-managed, well-designed properties located in places with access to job opportunities, high-performing schools, and public transportation. (*See Appendix A.*)

### **McHenry County Housing Authority, the Fiscal Agent**

The McHenry County Housing Authority (MCHA) acts as the fiscal agent for RHI.<sup>14</sup> MCHA contracts for services with parties external to the IGA. For example, Housing Choice Partners, a not-for-profit organization, provided mobility-counseling services to families during the HUD-funded pilot described in Appendix B. The fiscal agent also contracts with BRicK Partners, a consulting firm that has advised and supported RHI since 2012, when BRicK assumed certain roles that had previously been managed by MPC.

### ***How RHI Operates***

RHI exists to address longstanding issues. These issues include the jobs–housing mismatch identified in the 1999 regional rental market analysis, and disparities in access to opportunity that were quantified and mapped as part of the region’s 2013 FHEA. Generally, the goal of RHI is to increase the affordable housing options within mixed-income communities in amenity-rich opportunity areas and neighborhoods in the midst of revitalization. This section of the paper describes how those areas are defined, how RHI operates to meet its goals, and outcomes to date.

### **Defining Opportunity Areas**

A working group composed of PHAs, policy advocates, practitioners, academics, and other stakeholders, and convened by MPC in response to the 1999 regional rental market analysis, recognized that many of the areas near jobs and transit (“opportunity areas”) were located within the jurisdictions of small PHAs that had very few vouchers available for project basing. This recognition led to the establishment of RHI, with three PHAs

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<sup>14</sup> As mentioned earlier, HUD has provided funding to RHI. The funding came from the HCV administrative fee set-aside, which must go to a PHA.

agreeing to create a regional pool of HCVs to support development that would meet agreed-upon priorities, including locational criteria.

Initially, RHI linked its selection criteria to the MMC Housing Committee's Housing Endorsement Criteria (*see Appendix A*), which prioritized locating affordable housing near jobs, transit, and amenities and in locales with a mix of income levels represented.<sup>15</sup> Since then, the scoring process has evolved to rely upon a broad range of quantitative indicators to evaluate these same outcome objectives.

As described in Appendix B, HUD funded a request from RHI in 2011, providing financial support from HUD's administrative fee set-aside to be used, among other things, to refine RHI's metrics for identifying opportunity areas. With this funding, RHI and a range of stakeholders worked with the HUD data provided to CMAP for the FHEA, to agree upon definitions of opportunity areas and to generate opportunity maps.<sup>16</sup> RHI developed an opportunity index that weighted equally indicators of poverty, housing stability, job access, labor market engagement, school performance, and transit access.

RHI used its index to score each census tract in the Chicago metro area on a 1-to-10 scale. Opportunity areas have a rating of 6 to 10. Tracts with a rank of 1 to 5 qualify as non-opportunity or "traditional" neighborhoods, meaning RHI will support proposals in those areas only if they are part of a broader revitalization strategy that leverages support from the private sector and resources from a range of public-sector entities (local, county, regional, state, and/or federal).

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<sup>15</sup> *Northern Illinois Housing Endorsement Criteria*. Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. Web. <http://mayorscaucus.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Housing-Endorsement-Criteria-072310.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> As a Sustainable Communities Initiative grantee, CMAP was tasked with performing an FHEA, a regional analysis intended to identify disparities in access to opportunity. HUD guidance identified indicators that could be used to measure opportunity. RHI worked with these indicators.

## **Developing Properties in Opportunity Areas**

Through the IGA and the addendum to the Administrative Plan, the PHAs participating in RHI agree to form a selection panel<sup>17</sup> to determine which PBV proposals to fund. The way in which proposals are solicited for review by the panel highlights the value of the role played by CMAP. The PBV program requires that PBV proposals be solicited competitively, and CMAP helps to ensure compliance with this PBV program requirement.

Using its extensive network of public- and private-sector contacts regionwide, CMAP works with RHI participants to draft and issue appropriate solicitation materials. Developer proposals that are submitted in response to this solicitation are sent to CMAP, which disseminates the proposals to the selection panel along with its analysis of the proposals. CMAP then convenes the selection panel and facilitates the review discussions at least twice each year.

Recognizing that PBVs alone would not incentivize development in opportunity areas, MPC worked closely with IHDA to secure extra points within its Qualified Allocation Plan for developers who include RHI units when applying for competitively allocated LIHTCs. (CMAP continues this relationship with IHDA on behalf of RHI.) RHI and IHDA also implemented a coordinated application process for developers to secure both RHI and LIHTC through one timetable. To accomplish this, RHI requires two things of developers: (a) meet with CMAP in advance of submitting the application for LIHTCs to ensure that the development advances RHI's criteria, and (b) submit one supplemental document along with the LIHTC application specifically addressing RHI's scoring priorities. Developers who meet these requirements receive a conditional commitment letter from RHI that becomes part of the developer's application for LIHTCs. IHDA is able to review that application on the same timetable as the RHI selection panel reviews the developer's proposal.

The selection panel ranks proposals according to jointly agreed-upon selection factors that are specified in the addendum to the Administrative Plan. The addendum also makes clear

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<sup>17</sup> CMAP and IHDA have an advisory role on the panel.

how proposals are to be selected from among those determined to be eligible for an award of PBVs based on the rankings.

Along with such criteria as track record and experience, the selection factors incorporate locational criteria, providing the link to opportunity areas. Examples of factors are proximity to transit, jobs, or downtown centers; access to high-quality schools; and neighborhood stability, taking into account factors such as vacancy rates and the homeownership rate for the community in which the development is proposed to be located. The addendum states that the PHA with jurisdiction over the area is the “lead housing authority”; this agency has final approval of the development recommended for its jurisdiction. The award of RHI vouchers is final only when the lead agency approves the proposal.

### **Facilitating Lease-Up in Opportunity Areas and Revitalization Areas**

In RHI’s initial years of operation, each PHA referred households off their own waiting lists when developments were ready for lease-up. As part of the 2011 funding from HUD’s administrative fee set-aside, a regional list was created as a more efficient mechanism for PHAs, developers, and wait-listed households alike. The list is composed of interested families from the participating PHAs’ tenant-based waiting lists; only families referred from these waiting lists are eligible for placement on the regional waiting list. The addendum to the Administrative Plan specifies the obligations of PHAs participating in RHI with respect to referrals to the waiting list, in addition to outreach. Materials prepared by Housing Choice Partners explain RHI, and participating PHAs use these materials when conducting outreach to the wait-listed families. BRicK Partners is under contract through the fiscal agent to manage the regional list.

### **Outcomes to Date**

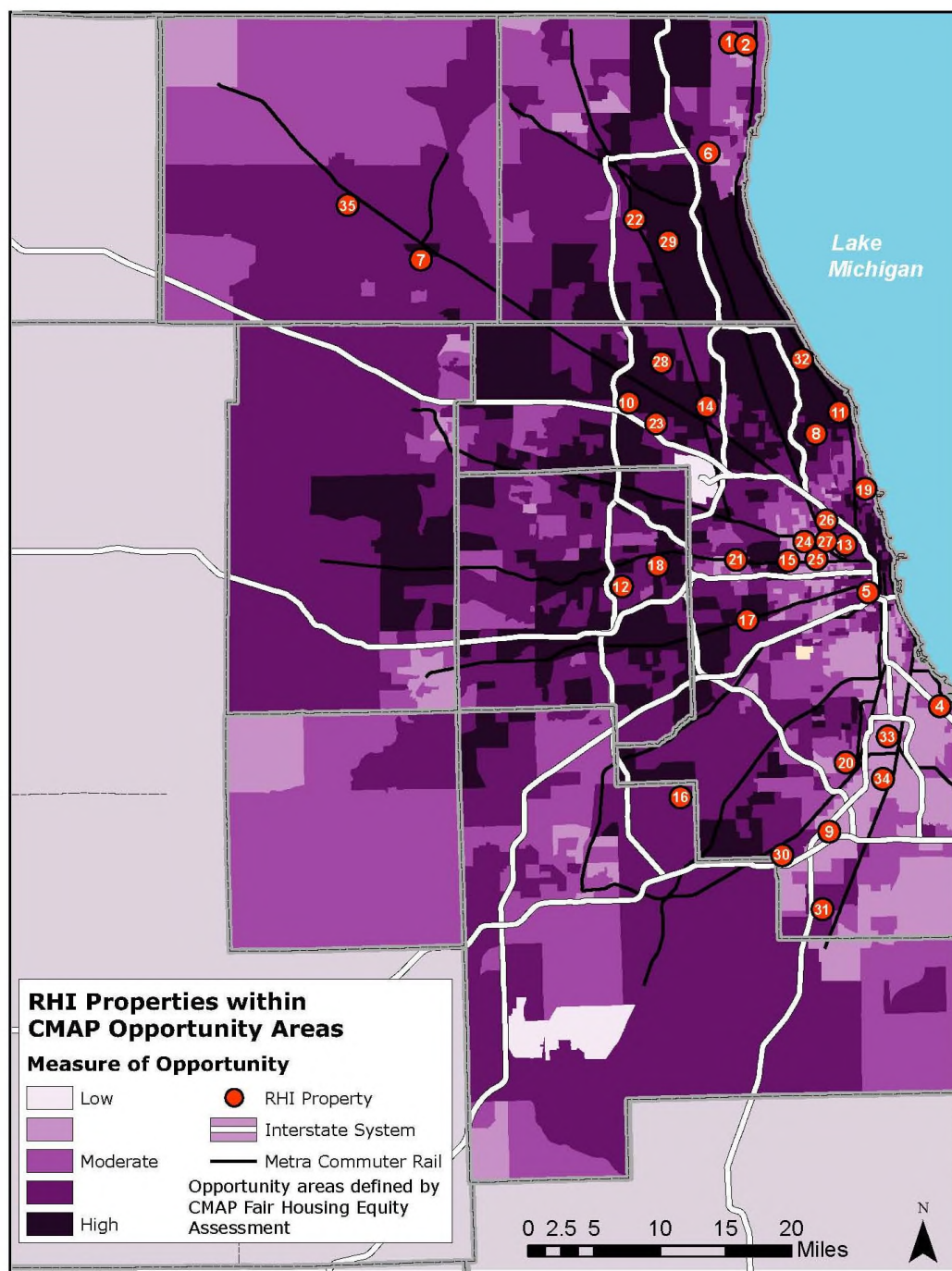
In order to achieve the goal of developing affordable housing in opportunity and revitalizing areas, RHI has benefited from the involvement of its various partners, contractors, and advisors, who have contributed to its administrative capacity. RHI also has benefited from the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders, such as employers and public-sector leaders (at the county, regional, state, and federal levels), who have helped to

facilitate conversations, engage suburban communities and business leaders, and create an environment in which municipal leaders have begun to recognize that the PBV program can be a tool to help bridge the jobs–housing mismatch.

While there is still some opposition to RHI development, the support of this broad range of stakeholders has made a positive difference. In many instances, new development has taken place in opportunity areas that had no affordable or mixed-income multifamily housing prior to the development of RHI-supported properties.

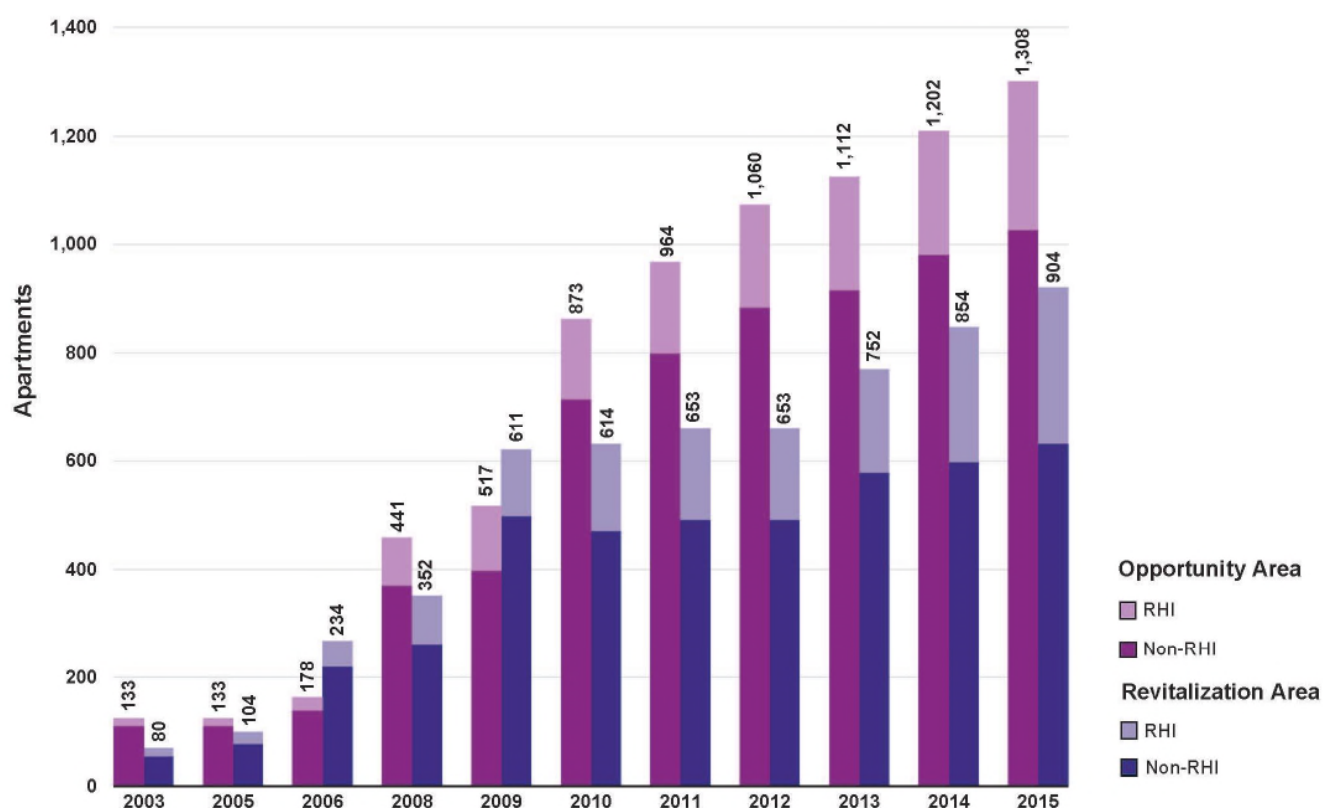
While RHI continues to evolve, the outcomes to date and lessons learned are considerable:

**RHI partners have committed 546 RHI subsidies to 34 developments, supporting approximately 2,200 total apartments.** The pooling and transferring of subsidies has allowed RHI to support proposals that local jurisdictions could not otherwise undertake. As shown in the following map, RHI developments span a range of communities; more than half are in opportunity areas. While the vast majority of RHI developments to date have benefited from LIHTCs, RHI partners have expanded their outreach to include existing owners and are pursuing new tactics and incentives to use RHI as a preservation tool in opportunity areas. One example of such an incentive is that RHI property owners are now eligible for the Housing Opportunity Area Tax Abatement Program. This program, which is administered by PHAs and reduces the property tax levy for a landlord renting a unit in an opportunity area to an HCV family, was enacted in 2003, amended in 2008 to include RHI-assisted properties, and extended in 2014 for another 10 years. It is also worth noting that most family developments using LIHTC in the Chicago suburbs have also utilized RHI, with those numbers increasing in recent years.



**RHI's efforts have helped to foster increased supply in job-rich opportunity areas.<sup>18</sup>**

While IHDA has long encouraged affordable housing development for the workforce, numerous barriers continued to prevent the development of LIHTC properties in job-rich areas. RHI's focus on proximity to jobs, combined with IHDA's award of additional points to RHI-assisted developments, has effectively fostered new LIHTC development in job-rich opportunity areas. The chart below shows the number of RHI subsidies and non-RHI units in all of the developments that RHI has supported in both opportunity and revitalization areas, from 2003 through 2015.



<sup>18</sup> *Chicago Regional Voucher Pilot: Final Report to U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development*. Metropolitan Planning Council, Apr. 2015.



## ***How RHI Is Funded***

As RHI continues to expand, identifying sustainable sources of administrative funding for its third-party partners remains a concern. From 2002 through 2011, RHI was funded solely through philanthropy and was treated as a small component of MPC's larger work plan. Annual philanthropic grants dedicated to RHI never exceeded \$75,000. If MPC's leveraging of internal resources is taken into account, then the full cost of the program may have been close to \$150,000 annually.

As was noted earlier, in 2011 HUD provided financial support from its administrative fee set-aside to support RHI and for other purposes (described in Appendix B). The RHI component of the funding remained at \$75,000 annually over a 3-year period. In 2015, HUD responded to a request from RHI for additional funding, providing \$152,500 to continue its operations while implementing the new opportunity metrics, updating the new regional waiting list, and pursuing policy and procedural changes<sup>19</sup> that will lead to a sustainable operating and funding strategy through CMAP.<sup>20</sup>

RHI partners also hope to identify funding to support mobility counseling. A preliminary assessment conducted by BRick indicates that RHI staffing costs nearly \$900 per housing unit created with RHI subsidies. *(See Appendix C for a review of how the assessment was conducted.)* When considering the cost of the program, it is important to take into account the fact that most RHI developments are part of broader mixed-income or supportive housing development; thus the housing options created are greater than those subsidized by RHI.

## ***Conclusion***

In 1999, a rental market analysis of the Chicago region identified a severe rental housing shortage and jobs–housing mismatch, and suggested the need for further cooperation

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<sup>19</sup> For example, partners hope to align occupancy standards, background checks, and priority preferences for special needs populations (which currently vary from PHA to PHA, hindering a smooth process).

<sup>20</sup> *Regional Housing Initiative*. Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014. Web. [www.cmap.illinois.gov/livability/housing/RHI](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/livability/housing/RHI)

among housing authorities, governmental bodies, and community-based organizations. RHI embodies such cooperation. Since its inception in 2002, the PHAs participating in RHI have worked together and with their private- and public-sector partners to develop more than 2,200 units of housing, increasingly in opportunity areas where affordable housing options would not otherwise exist. The RHI structure made it possible for these PHAs not only to pool their subsidies, but also to align their regional growth and fair housing priorities through the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization.

RHI was built by a broad set of engaged stakeholders who recognized the value of the Housing Choice Voucher program as a tool for supporting a range of housing options in areas characterized by good schools, jobs, and transit. Despite barriers such as community resistance to affordable housing and negative perceptions of the HCV program and the families it serves, RHI and its stakeholders implemented a workable operating model that aligns public housing resources with local and regional priorities.

Without question, the technical, financial, and political barriers to scalability and sustainability remain cumbersome, both for the PHAs that contribute vouchers and for the third-party partners who facilitate the development process and regional connections and provide direct services to families. Nonetheless, RHI has shown both its versatility and its replicability. It is a promising model that provides many useful examples and lessons for other metropolitan areas as they implement regional housing strategies geared toward securing access to opportunity.

## Appendix A. Housing Endorsement Criteria



### Northeastern Illinois HOUSING ENDORSEMENT CRITERIA

For our region to remain competitive, we must diversify our housing stock. By securing broad-based support for these Housing Endorsement Criteria, municipal leaders, neighbors, employers and community-based organizations can more effectively attract, identify and promote proposals for quality developments. To promote housing and mixed-use developments that meet community needs while also addressing broader regional sustainability and livability goals, new and rehabbed housing should meet most of the principles and criteria below:

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

##### Promote Economic Development and Workforce Housing

Housing, when appropriately located, encourages the expansion of existing and the location of new businesses and industries within the region. The mismatch between where the jobs are and where workers can afford to live has significant costs. Increasingly, employers recognize that local housing for all levels of their workforce promotes stability and productivity for the workers as well as the individual company.

##### Encourage an Array of Quality Housing Options throughout the Region

Redevelopments and new housing accessible to a wide range of income levels are needed to provide the local workforce and residents with a housing supply that is critically needed and currently lacking. By the year 2040, our region is expected to grow significantly, adding over 2 million people, and the housing market must be stabilized and expanded at all price points to accommodate this dramatic growth.

##### Support Innovative Community Development and Design

Quality residential and mixed-use developments maintain, enhance, or create livable streets, neighborhoods and public spaces oriented to the pedestrian. A variety of housing types provides a healthy mix of residents from different age groups, racial and cultural backgrounds, income levels and household types. New developments foster a sense of community, while promoting people's choice of housing, privacy and convenient access to nearby amenities.

##### Provide for Mixed Uses Within a Neighborhood

In order to enhance community livability and decrease auto-dependency, a mix of land uses within a neighborhood combines residential with retail, restaurants, schools and other amenities in close proximity. The location of schools, entertainment districts, parks, businesses, institutions, and recreational facilities will be consciously integrated with new and existing residential developments to encourage ease of pedestrian access.

##### Minimize Cost of Municipal Services

Clustering housing near existing infrastructure minimizes the per capita costs of municipal services by allowing for more efficiency and economies of scale.

##### Promote the Use of Public Transit

Housing, together with commercial space and public amenities, should be planned for, and built first, within walking distance of existing or planned transit service in order to strengthen transit ridership and decrease traffic congestion.

##### Encourage Sustainability and Livability

There are ample opportunities within existing service areas of our older cities and suburbs to provide for a portion of projected housing needs over the next 30 years. Infill development and redevelopment within

existing municipal areas and conservation developments are of tremendous value. Adhering to development policies that encourage compact, mixed-use development will promote an array of housing types and expand individual choice. This will advance other regional and community needs, such as the protection of open space and the growth of the local tax base.

## **SPECIFIC CRITERIA**

### **Location**

Infill development and redevelopment within existing cities and towns, as well as new conservation developments, will receive preference. In order to maximize compatibility with public transit and minimize auto use, housing within one mile of major transit services, a job hub or town center, provides a future market for transit. The project may be within two miles of a rail transit station if provisions are made to provide ongoing shuttle services to the future residents. Major transit service is defined as a bus or rail stop with peak period wait times of no more than 30 minutes. Major transit service also includes, funded, but not yet built, fixed rail stations.

### **Land-Use**

New developments and redevelopments that aim to cluster housing in an efficient manner, in context with the surrounding community, to preserve natural resources and open space will be given priority attention. Higher densities and mixed uses are particularly appropriate near Metra and CTA stations to reduce the growth of traffic congestion on local and regional roads.

### **Attainability**

Mixed-income housing developments, which include units accessible to moderate-income working families and to households with lower incomes, along with market rate units in the same complex, will be given preference. Developments that help balance affordability levels within communities, while assuring consistent quality and design, will receive strong support.

### **Design**

New developments that stress quality design and construction to help ensure its long-term contribution to the improvement of the neighborhood will be given preference. The proposed buildings will fit their setting, complementing and enhancing the existing neighborhood, and promoting a sense of community, pedestrian friendly design and the other principles of good village design. Proposals will address transit use and access and, where appropriate, the potential for mixed-use.

### **Management**

The management and maintenance of developments are as critical as the initial design and construction to meeting the goals of enhancing communities. Therefore, the capacity of the development team to successfully address long-term needs, as evidenced by its track record in selling, leasing and managing development properties, and its history with neighborhood and/or tenant relations, will also be considered.



The Housing Endorsement Criteria is a joint initiative of the Metropolitan Planning Council and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Housing and Community Development Committee. For more information, contact Allison Milld Clements, Director of Housing Initiatives, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, at 321-201-4507 or [amilld@mayorscaucus.org](mailto:amilld@mayorscaucus.org).

## ***Appendix B. HUD-Funded Pilot, 2011–2014***

From 2011 to 2014, HUD provided funds in response to a request for support to refine and expand RHI in Chicago. (Funding was provided from the HCV administrative fee set-aside.) The pilot was squarely aimed at testing a *replicable* policy that HUD and PHAs could implement elsewhere to align HCV mobility goals with local and regional plans. Funding flowed through the McHenry County Housing Authority, which was participating in RHI and agreed to serve as the fiscal agent. The funding enabled third-party partners to facilitate RHI and implement the following innovations:

- Create and market a regional tenant waiting list for RHI, composed of referrals from all participating PHAs. Prior to this innovation, each PHA sent referrals at the time of lease-up to the lead PHA, but this proved inefficient for all parties (developers, PHAs, applicants).
- Develop a regional “opportunity area” definition, informed by the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA) metrics (provided to CMAP and other Sustainable Communities Initiative recipients even before CMAP finished its own analysis of the metrics to create the FHEA). RHI partners used an index that equally weighted poverty, housing stability, job access, labor market engagement, school performance, and transit access. The resulting index scored each census tract in the Chicago metro area on a 1-to-10 scale. An opportunity neighborhood had a rating of 6 to 10. Tracts with a rank of 1 to 5 qualified as a non-opportunity or “traditional” neighborhoods, meaning RHI would support proposals in those areas only if they were part of a broader revitalization strategy, leveraging support from the private sector and resources from a range of public-sector entities (local, county, regional, state, and/or federal).
- Develop new communications materials and provide more extensive one-on-one assistance to clarify benefits and definitions of opportunity areas to households receiving HCVs. This support and management was provided by third-party partner and mobility counselor Housing Choice Partners to individuals receiving an HCV from a PHA that is part of RHI.

- Design and execute a new regional tenant-based strategy with Housing Choice Partners as the third-party partner, providing a new portability advocate and two types of interventions for HCV recipients to move to opportunity areas in the Chicago metro area. By random selection, recipients either received both mobility counseling and a \$500 grant, or a \$500 grant only. To codify the innovations in the pilot, RHI partners created a model addendum to PHA Administrative Plans. Much of the detail in that addendum outlined needed protocols for the randomization of the interventions examined to promote tenant-based mobility programs.

Findings from a RAND Corporation independent evaluation of the two tenant-based interventions are expected to be published in early 2016, but were based on only 2 years of actual activity because it took nearly a year to define the strategy and develop the procedures.<sup>21</sup> RAND Corporation found that almost 12 percent of households receiving both counseling and the incentive moved to areas that had lower poverty rates, less racial segregation, and higher educational outcomes, and that those who received counseling moved further away and to opportunity neighborhoods with lower rates of poverty and higher median household incomes.<sup>22</sup> A valuable outcome of the evaluation is its identification of barriers and strategies that can inform future efforts.

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<sup>21</sup> An independent evaluation was conducted by the RAND Corporation, and funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, to learn about how and whether the two types of incentives would induce HCV recipients who had requested a moving voucher to move to opportunity neighborhoods. HUD funding provided the \$500 grants.

<sup>22</sup> Schwartz, Heather, Kate Mihaly, and Breann Gala. *Encouraging Residential Moves to Opportunity Neighborhoods: An Experiment Testing Incentives Offered to Housing Voucher Recipients*. RAND Corporation, to be published in 2016.

## ***Appendix C. Preliminary Cost Assessment of the Chicago-Area Regional Housing Mobility Program***

RHI has not benefited from a detailed cost analysis, and there are many ways to think about such an undertaking. The simplest approach is to calculate the cost of the staffing needed to facilitate RHI's work plan, and how that compares to housing created. A few notes about this simple approach:

- It does not include any in-kind PHA costs for participating in the regional effort.
- It also does not include the inevitable savings associated with having one third-party organization manage the procurement process and provide other administrative efficiencies.
- Most significantly, this cost analysis does not reflect the development costs of RHI properties *at all*, but only the RHI staffing costs to facilitate the process.
- Before the pilot, there was no regional waiting list to manage; this is now a component of the RHI work plan in addition to the outreach, developer review, and selection process and the necessary coordination among IHDA and the other partners.
- The current RHI work plan does not include counseling for households moving through RHI, but the staff who maintain the waiting list use outreach materials and strategies that were created or informed by Housing Choice Partners during the pilot.
- RHI has historically supported buildings in desirable neighborhoods that are typically out of reach to lower-income households *and* properties that are part of a broader neighborhood revitalization strategy. Because the two approaches do not require a different level of staffing from RHI, the costs are the same.

Given the above, the simple math involved in this analysis is just to multiply \$150,000 × 13 years (an estimate of annual RHI staffing costs since the year that the first RHI partners signed their IGA) and to divide that by the approximately 2,200 rentals created in the 34 developments that included RHI subsidies (and non-RHI units) during that timeframe.

The resulting answer to the above equation suggests that RHI staffing costs have amounted to \$886 per housing option created with RHI subsidies.

Research undertaken by RAND Corporation as part of its evaluation of CRHCI<sup>23</sup> illustrated that housing mobility programs typically cost about \$3,000 per household to support successful opportunity moves through counseling and program administration; however, the expense of a project-based program is entirely different. While tenant-based programs help families to pursue *existing* housing options in opportunity areas, the project-based approach facilitates a process for creating new housing options for lower-income families. Furthermore, the project-based approach would also benefit from housing counseling for participating households.

Despite this comparison of “apples and oranges,” the simple analysis above may prove useful in informing future refinements to a regional project-based approach, especially in those regions where the rental housing supply is lacking in opportunity areas and where smaller PHAs operating in those jurisdictions lack the vouchers and experience to promote mixed-income development.

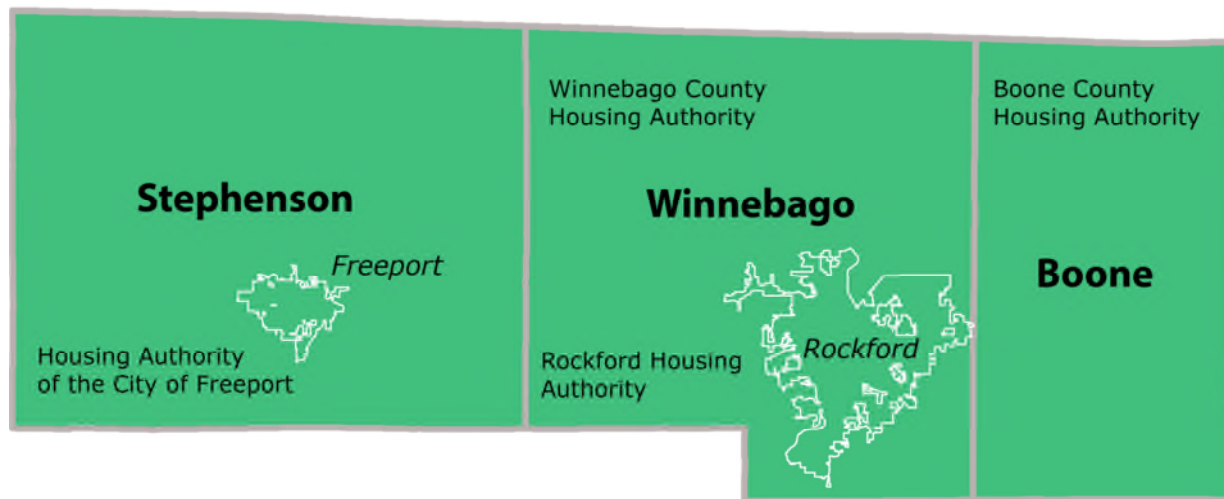
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<sup>23</sup> Schwartz, Heather, Kate Mihaly, and Breann Gala. *Encouraging Residential Moves to Opportunity Neighborhoods: An Experiment Testing Incentives Offered to Housing Voucher Recipients*. RAND Corporation, to be published in 2016. CRHCI is the acronym for the Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative, which included both RHI and the tenant-based interventions discussion above.



## Regional Housing Mobility: Rockford Area

This profile provides background on the “Rockford regional housing collaboration,” which is a series of collaborative efforts and activities among and between the four public housing agencies (PHAs) in northwestern Illinois: the Rockford Housing Authority, the Boone and Winnebago County housing authorities, and the Housing Authority of the City of Freeport, which administers assistance in Stephenson County.



The profile describes the roles of the various PHAs (and, in some cases, their partners) and provides details about the PHAs’ evolving roles and working relationships. Since the collaboration currently lacks a third-party, not-for-profit partner to coordinate and manage—on a regional basis—the collective activities performed by the partners, much of this profile describes areas of collaboration among the PHAs and their partners. These areas of collaboration have the potential to be expanded if the collaboration is ultimately scaled up. The profile concludes with a description of some of the challenges to formalizing a regional arrangement as well as some of the activities that provide reason for optimism.

## ***Background***

The impetus for collaboration came from a combination of factors, including an increase in community resistance to the development of affordable housing in the City of Rockford<sup>24</sup> and an increase in poverty<sup>25</sup> in the suburban counties surrounding and near Rockford—Boone, Stephenson, and Winnebago. Budgetary pressures at the suburban PHAs also played a role. While the suburban PHAs had relatively few Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) and a dearth of affordable housing options, the City of Rockford,<sup>26</sup> which has historically experienced concentrated poverty, had a relative abundance of HCVs. Residents of Rockford, meanwhile, were generally unable to access housing or services in the suburban areas due to the limited supply of affordable rental housing. Importantly, despite the increase in poverty in the suburban counties, the county schools have consistently higher graduation rates and a higher percentage of students prepared for college than students in the Rockford school system.<sup>27</sup>

A regional analysis of disparities published in 2014<sup>28</sup> found that in Winnebago County, “a disproportionate concentration of public and assisted housing product and voucher utilization exist in minority concentrated and low income zip codes and census tracts within the Rockford City limit boundaries.” The study recommended a regional approach to

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<sup>24</sup> WIFR Newsroom. “Neighbors Opposing Proposal for East Side Public Housing Development.” 23 WIFR. WIFR.com. Updated 1 June 2015. Holden, Lindsey. “HUD to Investigate Potential Fair-Housing Violations in Rockford.” *Rockford Register Star*, 24 Nov. 2015. Web. Holden, Lindsey. Rockford Aldermen Lawyer-Up, Postpone New Towne Affordable-Housing Vote. *Rockford Register Star*, 21 Dec. 2015. Web. Poulisse, Adam. Controversial Housing Debate Continues in Rockford. *Rockford Register Star*, 21 Nov. 2015. Web.

<sup>25</sup> Correnti, Amy J. “Our View: Joblessness, Poverty Are All Too Common in Rockford Area.” *Rockford Register Star*, 10 Feb. 2013. Web. Small-area income and poverty estimates trends are available at [census.gov](http://census.gov).

<sup>26</sup> The City of Rockford is located 90 miles northwest of Chicago and is the third-largest city in Illinois, with a population of 149,000.

<sup>27</sup> The Illinois Report Card (<http://www.illinoisreportcard.com/>) provides information about the graduation rates, spending, student demographics, enrollment, test scores, and college-readiness of students in every school district in Illinois. The City of Rockford is part of Winnebago County, but has a graduation rate of 67 percent and a college-readiness rate of 29 percent (based on the percentage of students scoring a 21 or higher on the ACT)—lower than anywhere else in Winnebago, Boone, and Stephenson counties.

<sup>28</sup> *Fair Housing Equity Assessment: Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice – Public Housing Authority De-Concentration Plan*, p. 166. Rockville Metropolitan Agency for Planning. Web. [http://www.rmapil.org/assets/documents/housing\\_documentation.pdf](http://www.rmapil.org/assets/documents/housing_documentation.pdf)

managing HCVs to increase family access to opportunity and address impediments to fair housing choice.<sup>29</sup>

The collaboration began in 2004 when the Winnebago County Housing Authority (WCHA) received a HOPE VI grant and a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) allocation to redevelop a property in the City of Rockford. Because the project was in its jurisdiction, the Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) partnered with WCHA to facilitate the demolition and reconstruction of the project.<sup>30</sup>

Then, in 2007 and 2008, two concurrent events strengthened this collaboration.

The first event was a lawsuit filed by tenants who challenged RHA's plan to demolish 84 units of public housing.<sup>31</sup> The plaintiffs objected that the replacement options would perpetuate segregation, because most of the proposed relocation units were in predominantly minority, high-crime areas, and no mobility counseling would be offered to the displaced families.<sup>32</sup> The eventual settlement included a mobility program to temporarily relocate 71 families with HCVs while the agency replaced 77 units of affordable housing.<sup>33</sup> Through its administration of this program, RHA increased its capacity to manage HCVs and mobility-counseling and relocation programs, and incorporated this expertise into the administration of its Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. The agency also adopted exception rents and became eligible for the State's Housing Opportunity Area Tax Abatement Program, which provides a tax reduction to

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<sup>29</sup> *Fair Housing Equity Assessment: Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice – Public Housing Authority De-Concentration Plan*, p. 140. Rockville Metropolitan Agency for Planning. Web. [http://www.rmapil.org/assets/documents/housing\\_documentation.pdf](http://www.rmapil.org/assets/documents/housing_documentation.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Rockford Housing Authority. "Annual PHA Plan: PHA Fiscal Year 2005," Appendix E. *Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development: Rockford, Illinois, Plan Years 2005–2009*. 8 Nov. 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Curry, Corina. "Residents Fighting Addams Demolition." *Rockford Register Star*, 31 July 2007. Web.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Housing Choice Partners of Illinois, Inc. *Report on Implementation of a Mobility Program for Residents of Jane Addams Village and Housing Choice Voucher Program Participants by the Rockford Housing Authority*. 31 Aug. 2009. Web. <http://www.hcp-chicago.org/2014/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/HCP-Final-Narrative-Report-to-RHA.pdf>

landlords in opportunity areas who rent to voucher holders. This increase in capacity and program knowledge was then shared with WCHA.

The second event was that Boone County Housing Authority (BCHA) and the Housing Authority of the City of Freeport (HACF) asked WCHA to help manage their HCV programs. Both agencies were facing budget shortfalls and no longer had the capacity to manage the programs on their own.

These events paved the way for collaboration across a broader range of issues. At present, the participating agencies and their partners collaborate with respect to the administration of their HCV, FSS, and Workforce Development programs, in addition to project-based voucher (PBV) development initiatives.

### ***Partners and Their Roles***

Each participating PHA manages a different element of the Rockford regional housing collaboration.

#### **Rockford Housing Authority**

RHA has extensive development experience and administers close to 2,000 units of public housing and 2,000 HCVs. With its relatively large HCV program, it has ample capacity to convert HCVs into project-based subsidies in opportunity areas. Through RHA's FSS program, all HCV-assisted households for the four participating PHAs are able to obtain mobility counseling.

#### **Winnebago County Housing Authority**

WCHA administers its own vouchers in addition to those of the Boone County and City of Freeport housing agencies. It also works with RHA to project-base RHA's HCV assistance in opportunity areas in Winnebago County, enabling RHA residents to access suburban homes.

WCHA also administers a project-based rental assistance program known as the Rental Housing Support Program (RHSP). This program, which is funded by the state of Illinois and administered by the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), is similar to the

PBV program. Through a series of intergovernmental agreements (IGAs), WCHA administers RHSP in Boone, Ogle, and Jo Daviess counties, in addition to administering it in Winnebago County. This means that families participating in the program face few (if any) administrative barriers when moving within the four-county RHSP jurisdiction covered by WCHA. If the Rockford regional housing collaboration is ultimately scaled up, the housing agencies for Ogle and Jo Daviess counties could become partners.

### **Housing Authority of the City of Freeport**

HACF is the PHA for Stephenson County. It administers an employment-readiness program for HACF residents and has partnered with RHA and WCHA to offer a similar program to its residents.

### **Boone County Housing Authority**

BCHA has many opportunity areas within its jurisdiction and is supportive of strategies to overcome transportation barriers to employment, including housing placement near employment and education clusters. The City of Belvidere in Boone County is currently reviewing the formation of a separate land bank entity to repurpose blighted and abandoned property to provide new opportunities for business generation and homes near these new and existing economic clusters.

### **Non-PHA Partners**

The PHAs participating in the Rockford regional housing collaboration have entered into partnerships to restore neighborhoods, create homeowners, and permanently house specific populations. If the collaboration is ultimately scaled up, these partnerships could be expanded.

### ***Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP)***

RMAP is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Rockford region. With a regional planning grant from HUD, RMAP undertook the regional analysis of disparities that was

mentioned earlier.<sup>34</sup> RMAP is interested in aligning the region’s assets—particularly jobs and transportation—in order to realize long-term regional economic improvements. RMAP received a Sustainable Communities Initiative grant from HUD.

### ***Rockford Area Economic Development Council***

The Rockford Area Economic Development Council focuses on regional economic advancement and is specifically interested in promoting industry clusters and advancing “concentrations” of clusters and jobs in areas of the region with existing developed infrastructure.

### ***National Community Stabilization Trust Donation and Look First Programs***

The National Community Stabilization Trust is a national, not-for-profit organization that helps to transfer abandoned and foreclosed properties from banks to local housing organizations. It has assisted RHA and WCHA in acquiring homes and is currently assisting in the acquisition of homes in Stephenson County and Boone County for families on RHA and HACF PBV waiting lists.

### ***PHA Working Relationships***

With limited formal agreements existing between the partners, the PHAs rely largely on informal working relationships supported by regular communication and trust between agencies. Representatives from each of the four PHAs communicate regularly, holding in-person meetings as they deem necessary. The PHA directors also meet routinely—for example, to leverage opportunities and determine the strongest paths for collaboration on housing and self-sufficiency efforts. These meetings often include agency staff and community partners. Each agency has direct electronic access to the others’ teams and an understanding that focus should align around serving the client.

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<sup>34</sup> *Fair Housing Equity Assessment: Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice – Public Housing Authority De-Concentration Plan*. Rockville Metropolitan Agency for Planning. Web. [http://www.rmapil.org/assets/documents/housing\\_documentation.pdf](http://www.rmapil.org/assets/documents/housing_documentation.pdf)

The current regional housing arrangement consists of formal and informal agreements between combinations of the participating PHAs to share resources and maximize capacity.

### **HOPE VI and Choice Neighborhoods Collaboration**

WCHA completed its HOPE VI project with the approval of RHA. As a result of that success, RHA applied for a Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant, with WCHA as a co-applicant.

### **Voucher Management**

Together the 4 PHAs have 2,722 vouchers (*see below*); WCHA plays a role in managing all of these vouchers on behalf of itself and the 3 other agencies.

#### **HCVs Administered by PHAs**

<b>PHA</b>	<b>Vouchers</b>
Housing Authority of the City of Freeport	0 <sup>35</sup>
Boone County Housing Authority	238
Winnebago County Housing Authority	627
Rockford Housing Authority	1,857
Total	2,722

The arrangements differ between WCHA and each individual PHA.

#### ***Housing Authority of the City of Freeport***

In 2006, HACF signed an IGA transferring budget authority for its HCVs to WCHA. Among other things, WCHA now administers 111 apartments in the City of Freeport that are undergoing rehabilitation as part of HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. The waiting list for HACF is separate from that of WCHA.

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<sup>35</sup> Budget authority over HACF's 62 vouchers was transferred to WCHA.

### ***Boone County Housing Authority***

In 2008, WCHA signed an IGA with BCHA, agreeing to manage all of the HCVs (and other BCHA housing programs) in Boone County, making it possible for BCHA to maintain local governance despite administrative funding restraints in the wake of a HUD review. The waiting list for BCHA is separate from that of WCHA.

### ***Rockford Housing Authority***

Enhancing an already close relationship, RHA and WCHA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2011 to jointly manage their HCVs and to administer them throughout both jurisdictions. This MOU enables RHA to convert some of its HCVs into project-based housing in Winnebago County, increasing the supply of affordable homes in suburban Winnebago County. The heads of both PHAs agreed to meet regularly. The boards of both PHAs meet annually to improve efficiency and consistency across both jurisdictions.

RHA is approved for 199 RAD replacement units and has another 418 pending. These units will require demolition and relocation, and the PHA partners see the potential to include these RAD PBVs within their regional strategy, promoting opportunity area housing for wait-list referrals from the participating PHAs.

WCHA has provided new PBVs in Winnebago and the City of Rockford. WCHA will begin rehabilitation of a RAD project in the City of Freeport through its affordable housing development nonprofit in 2016, including offering services to residents. WCHA is also exploring the possibility of rehabilitating 50 new-construction units using RHA and WCHA PBVs. The housing authorities will use the experiences gained under existing MOUs and implementation of mobility programs to achieve movement within the City of Rockford from ZIP Codes of high concentrations of poverty to ZIP Codes with opportunity area census tracts.

Only 10 percent of the region's HCVs have been converted to PBVs. To scale up the conversion of HCVs to PBVs, the PHAs seek a third party who could effectively position the PBVs as incentives for municipalities and developers to advance the regional plan and Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA).



## **Workforce Development Resources**

In 2014, HACF invited RHA and WCHA to participate in its workforce development institute. The informal agreement memorializing this arrangement permits residents of the City of Rockford and Winnebago County to participate in a partnership with Rockford Health Systems (RHS) to help public housing residents learn employment skills and gain employment with the RHS hospital and clinic. RHS found that the program filled an employment need and saw the PHAs as a neighborhood stabilizing force.

To house successful program participants, RHA provided eight PBVs for the families in the neighborhood within walking distance of RHS, and rehabilitated foreclosed homes near a hospital. The program thus enabled residents to acquire housing and the skills needed to work at the nearby hospital.

The program received an Award of Merit from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) and an Award of Excellence from North Central Regional NAHRO. By returning foreclosed homes to productive use, the program has helped to stabilize the neighborhood and increase property tax payments to the locality.<sup>36</sup>

## ***Challenges and Reasons for Optimism***

Leadership across the PHAs is strong and committed to improving housing quality and access to opportunity for the region's low-income residents. These leaders and other housing providers and community planners acknowledge that a formalized regional housing initiative would help to guide collective agreement on strategies to address poverty. Traction on regionwide solutions has been difficult to achieve, however, as a regional action plan for affordable housing has not yet been formalized and supported, per the regional plan's housing recommendations, to deconcentrate poverty and improve the living accommodations for the region's most vulnerable populations.

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<sup>36</sup> O'Brien, Eric. "Home Depot Helps Transform Veterans Drop-In Center." WIFR.com, 19 Oct. 2015. Web.  
Jones, Reuben. "Families Move Into Foreclosed, Abandoned Homes Through New Program." WREX, 19 Aug. 2015.

In spite of these challenges, the collaboration has a number of significant accomplishments as well as promising future plans. The coordinated activities undertaken by participating PHAs have already resulted in 129 new housing options, 111 through RAD in opportunity areas. Development outside the City of Rockford has been credited with bringing reinvestment in response to foreclosures. Similarly, smaller suburban PHAs have benefited from the capacity and knowledge that RHA can provide. Encouragingly, the PHAs themselves have begun to coordinate their planning activities. In 2013, RHA developed a 5-year strategic plan to redevelop about 1,100 public housing units in lower density neighborhoods scattered throughout the city and region. WCHA and BCHA codified their support for this work, as well as their support for a formalized regional housing initiative, in their own 5-year plans. The Rockford region now has a 2014 plan that includes the FHEA and a commitment to deconcentrating poverty, and the PHAs are working to take this a step further and realize this commitment by formalizing the role of regional civic partners in a regional housing initiative.

## ***Conclusion***

PHA executive directors in the Rockford region have experienced many benefits from their collaboration by leveraging each other's strengths to work across borders and to enhance housing opportunities, workforce training, and an array of services for lower-income households. Recognizing that significant poverty and racial concentration persist in the City of Rockford, while opportunity areas in the suburbs offer jobs and higher-performing schools, the PHAs are particularly interested in implementing more formal and sustainable strategies for scaling up their efforts with civic partners.

The informal collaborative approach has yielded efficiencies and helped leverage additional resources, and the Rockford area experience can serve as a model for other places. The success of their partnership has given the PHAs confidence that an institutionalized regional housing initiative will strengthen community support and increase their impact.

Given the vast increase in suburban poverty trends across the country, and the inherent challenges faced by suburban leaders working to tackle these issues in a nation where most poverty alleviation programs were designed for the urban core, the PHA innovations

piloted in northwestern Illinois will likely resonate with metropolitan areas around the country.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Kneebone, Elizabeth. *The Growth and Spread of Concentrated Poverty, 2000 to 2008–2012*. Brookings Institute, Metropolitan Opportunity Series. Number 57. 31 July 2014,